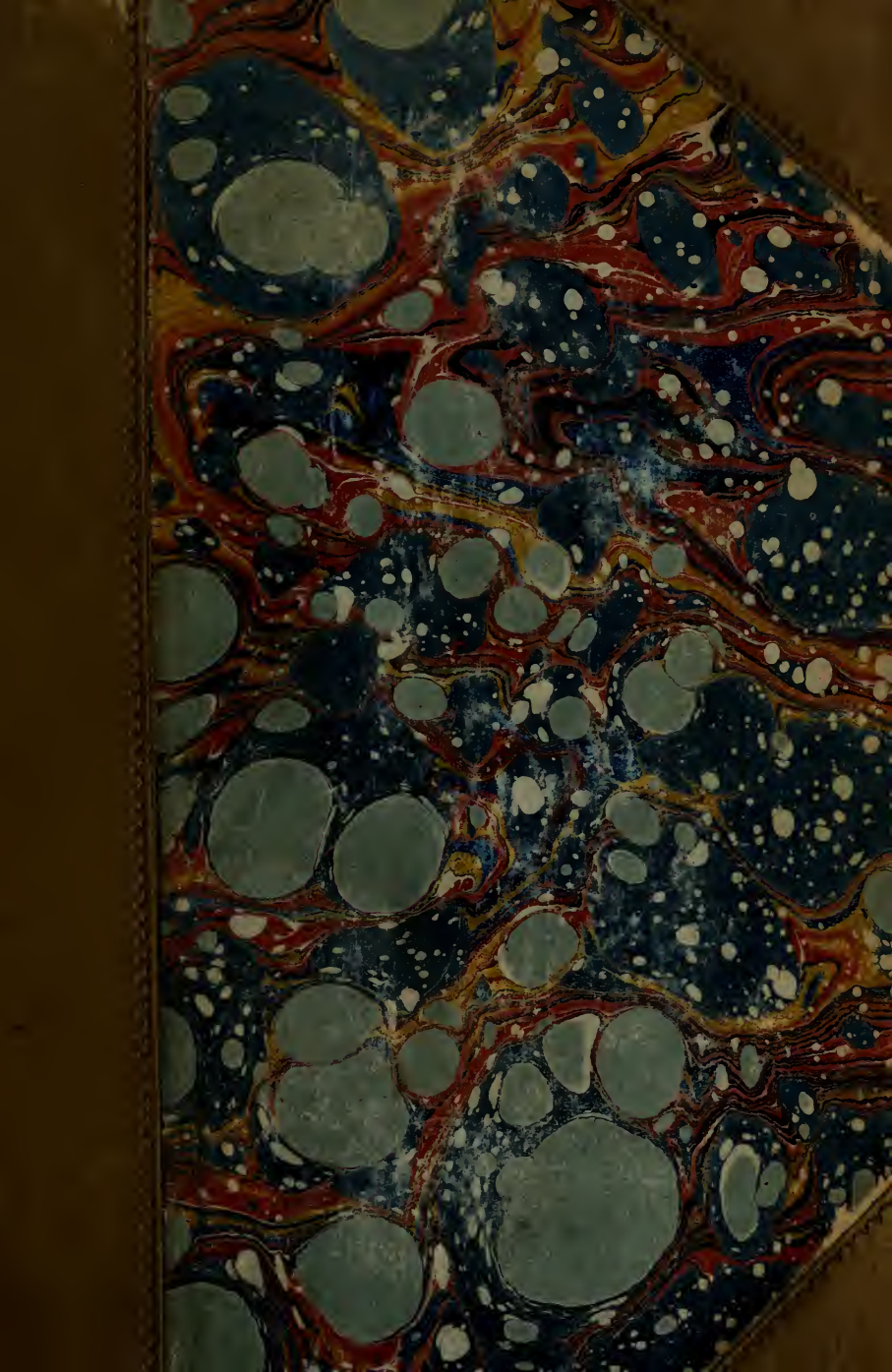

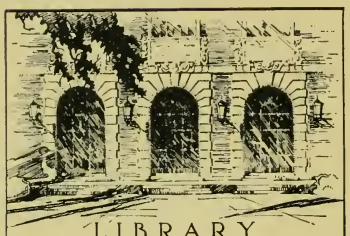

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THE

CAPABILITIES

OF

OUR CATHEDRALS.

BY

THE VERY REVEREND

THE DEAN OF CHESTER.

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THE CAPABILITIES OF OUR CATHEDRALS.

In estimating the capabilities of our Cathedrals, the first thing to be borne in mind is that no two of them are alike. There is just as much difference in their social and religious opportunities as there is in their architectural features. In both respects, indeed, a generic resemblance is found among them; but whether we criticise them in reference to the impression which they make on the eye, or in respect of their usefulness as Church institutions, we shall be quite at sea unless we observe also their specific varieties.

Compare, for instance, the three spires of Lichfield, "the sisters of the vale," which sometimes catch the eye of men of business, on the right hand of the railway, as they travel from the North-West to London, with the four towers of Exeter, which seem just now to have so intimate a connection with some of the most animated controversies of the modern Church of England, and the contrast is obviously great. Or, if we wish to draw our comparison from the interiors of our Cathedrals, we may place in startling opposition the long nave of Winchester, still speaking to us of William of Wykeham, with the grand octagon of Alan of Walsingham, at Ely; or, again, the minute and elaborate perpendicular panelling of Gloucester with the severe Norman simplicity of Durham. Just so it is easy—and on the present occasion it is very important—to draw sharp contrasts among the Cathedrals in regard to the peculiarities of their constitution, and, if I may so speak, their human environment. Canterbury has its unique institution of the Six Preachers; St. Asaph has its four Vicars Choral, who do the parochial work of the little city according to a peculiar system of rotation. The Cathedral of Chichester is at the extreme end of a rural Diocese; that of Manchester is in the centre of a huge population. Christ Church is in the midst of the University of Oxford, and naturally has theological professors among its Canons. St. David's is in a wild and impressive solitude. Wells has its population of 7,000; while Bath, in the same Diocese, has its 50,000. Carlisle and Chester are well placed for Diocesan work, in regard both to the railways and the people. But there is this difference, that in the former case the Cathedral city takes the lead in the Diocese; whilst, as to any subordination of the largest town in this Diocese, probably the less I say here on that subject the better.

In the midst of these differences, my best course is to take as my starting point the Cathedral with which I am most familiar. This method is most in harmony with the occasion; and thus too I shall be most likely to speak with intelligent knowledge.

I propose first to point out some opportunities of useful service which our Cathedral possesses, even if no change takes place in its constitution, and secondly, how it would have still greater facilities for permanent usefulness, if certain reforms were begun and accomplished.

Two general remarks must be made here in passing. The details which rise out of them must in a slight sketch like this be omitted. First there is a line of division, which runs across the whole subject, separating between Cathedrals of the Old Foundation and Cathedrals of the New. To the former belong those which have ancient statutes, such as Lincoln, York, Hereford, and Worcester. The others are Cathedrals founded by Henry VIII., such as Peterborough and Bristol. It is to the latter class that Chester belongs. The other remark which it is essential to make is this, that Modern Legislation has traversed the Statutes of Cathedrals in all directions. . Of course we are impelled to ask whether this Legislation has been wise on the one hand, or complete on the other. On this point I shall beg leave to make a remark before I end: but, in enumerating some of the Capabilities of a Cathedral as they have come before my notice, I shall for the most part make reference to our own Statutes, where they have not been repealed by Law.

And first I am disposed to mention a characteristic of the Cathedral, which does not usually attract the popular attention. The Mother Church is meant to be a place of most diligent Preaching. There is an affecting passage in reference to this subject in one of our Statutes. The sentence is to this effect: "Inasmuch as the Word of God is a light unto our feet and a lantern to our path, we do charge the Dean, nay, by the mercies of God we do intreat him, that he be diligent in preaching." A similar injunction is given to the Canons. There is also a distinct provision that the members of the Capitular body are to circulate, from the Cathedral as a centre, into those districts where sermons are wanted, and there to preach. Now as to the discharge of this latter function, happily a great change has passed over the pulpits of the Church of England since the founding of King Henry's Cathedrals. Every village has its preacher now, as well as its pastor; and for the most part more acceptable to the people than an itinerant Dean or Canon could possibly be. I am not sure, however, that there might not be in our Cathedrals a reservoir of Clerical help, so to speak, for parishes in time of emergency. But this I remark only by the way. A large amount of preaching in the Cathedrals themselves is a most evident duty, especially when, as in Chester, they are within reach of a considerable population. The copious spaces in our Naves are an invitation to the discharge of this duty. At Chester the establishment of Evening Services has been full of benefit and blessing in manifold ways, and I believe it has stimulated religious activity within the City at large. It does not become me to criticise other Cathedrals, in regard to what is done or not done. But I believe that a bold

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course, with assiduous preaching, is the best. In one Cathedral it is complained that the experiment was lately tried, and with great success, but has not been repeated. In another, that Evening Services have been established and then intermitted. It strikes me that it would be a benefit to the Metropolis, if the services at St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey could be continued through the year. As to any difficulty in obtaining preachers, this fear I cannot entertain for a moment; and here I most gladly seize the occasion afforded me for thanking the Clergy from all parts of this Diocese, who have preached, or promised to preach, at our Chester Evening Worship. They are perhaps rendering a greater service to the Church then they imagine; for not only have they thus an opportunity of addressing immense congregations, but by these visits they are helping to develope the Diocesan idea, which it is now most essential to bring into a reality.

From Preaching I turn to Prayer. If Cathedrals are places of public usefulness on Sundays, let it not be forgotten that they are places of quiet worship on Week-days. I am aware that many good men attach but a very slight value to this capability of these institutions. Sometimes even very rough and very inconsiderate things are said on this subject. I will not make a rough rejoinder; but I will simply refer to one who is mentioned, I think with both sympathy and approval, in the Holy Gospels. If Scripture Characters are patterns to us, I imagine that we are not at liberty to discard from our gallery of sacred portraits that Widow of the tribe of Aser, who, about the time of our Lord's birth, was daily engaged in prayer within the Temple precincts. Possibly such prayers as hers may do as much for the Church, as the activity of some of us who live in public and pray but little. I am sure that the Christian life is often strengthened through our Cathedral Prayers, and sorrow soothed by help of their musical expression. Here, however, I must say that a grave responsibility rests on the Cathedral Clergy, that by their own punctual attendance, and by strict enforcement of external reverence, they foster the conviction that the Prayers are a reality and not a routine. If any of them, by word or by influence, throw a slight upon this daily Cathedral observance, this may be a very good argument against their having accepted Cathedral appointments; but it is no argument against the daily service itself. In our own case benefit has resulted from the recent adoption of a special prayer, when the Clergy, Lay Clerks, and Choristers are assembled before the service, the rule of silence being enjoined on entering the Choir.

I have alluded to the Musical expression of our Prayers, and this leads me to mark a third function of these ancient institutions, viz., that they are Schools of Sacred Music. This subject and the last are somewhat closely connected. If the Music is to be perfect, there must be constant practising together, just as the crew of a boat cannot present a perfect example, unless there be continuous and associated effort. Now when I speak of Cathedral

Music as a standard and an example, I do not at all mean that Parochial Services should be regulated on our method. Very far the contrary. But I believe that our Cathedrals ought to present a pattern of sobriety and good taste in Sacred Music. Vagaries in this matter are more likely to be found in our Parish and District Churches. Gabbling on the one hand, and drawling on the other, are not, for the most part, characteristics of our Cathedrals. Let me add that, not merely as an example, but in other ways also, I think our Mother Churches ought to be in musical relation to their Dioceses. Thus, the large spaces to which I have alluded are invitations to Choral Festivals. Again, I should wish to see the Precentor a Diocesan as well as a Cathedral Officer. And let me say a word here for the Chorister boys. We are always touched when we read of Samuel in his little linen ephod. I think a warm feeling ought to be cherished for our young surpliced ministers, with an anxiety that they may grow up in the Temple service, for good and not for harm. A well-regulated Chorister School (I wish we had funds for doing more than we at present do at Chester) might be in most useful relationship to the Diocese at large. The whole subject of our Lay officials is a most serious one. Our Lay Clerks, being highly trained and acccomplished in one respect, are in great danger of taking a merely professional view of their sacred duties. I believe the best way of meeting this danger is that the Clergy of a Cathedral should strive themselves to maintain a high standard, and while firm in checking negligence or heedlessness, should treat their Lay brethren with kindnes and sympathy.

I have spoken of the Chorister School. But this phrase does not by any means sum up the whole educational responsibility of our Cathedrals. Very few persons are aware how great a place Education has in our Statutes. Our King's School or Grammar School is an essential part of our foundation; and the Dean is seriously charged by the Statutes not to neglect his duties in regard to it. I regret that recent Legislation has almost entirely lost sight of this feature of our system. There is always a popular nostrum for the evils of the Church; and the popular nostrum of late years has been the increase of small livings. To this purpose the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have been applying the endowments withdrawn from our Cathedrals; and a most important purpose it is. I fully and heartily admit this; but it is not more important, I venture to say, than the maintaining and the strengthening of Christian Education. Just now, too, there is a great demand for precisely that kind of education which would have been supplied by our Cathedral Schools, if they had been well developed according to the principles of their original foundation. I can testify that in our own Diocesan city, though we have a good Cathedral School, there is an urgent de-demand for something higher and better still; and such an end might be secured by the restoring of our University Exhibitions and the supply of better premises. In reply to an application for help,

last year, to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, I learnt that they were powerless: so that I hail now with much gratitude the powers conferred upon them by the Endowed Schools Bill, which has recently become Law.

It will have been observed that these remarks, though dealing with detached points, one by one, have all tended towards the enunciation of one general principle, namely, that a Cathedral is pre-eminently a Diocesan Institution. It is just here that I lay the greatest stress; and it is just here that the convictions of the country need the most careful and yet the most rapid maturing. There is great activity in Parochial Life. We all know what that means. We have also a clear idea of the Church of England as a whole. But the idea of the Diocese seems as if it had great difficulty in working its way into the English mind. And yet the Diocese is the unit, and one essential characteristic, of the English Church. I hope this Congress will help on the progress of educating the public mind in this respect; and I think it will. To a great extent, the Clergy of our parishes are an aggregate of Independent Ministers visited at intervals by the Bishop, whom they receive very respectfully, for the discharge of certain functions. I have heard it said of a Clergyman that he was an excellent and laborious man, but that his parish ought to have been an Island. I think we might say with some justice, that our aggregate of parishes is an Archipelago, among the islands of which the Episcopal yacht assiduously cruises. What we want is that this Archipelago should be turned into a Continent, by the acquisition of some better consciousness of our Diocesan life, and some new arrangements for consolidating and strengthening this life.

How is this to be attained?

I believe that very much may be done by means of our Cathedrals; and I am very glad that a discussion upon "Diocesan Organization" is now followed by one upon "The Capabilities of our Cathedrals."

Mr. Clabon seems to think that, in order to realize the Diocesan idea, the Cathedral system ought to be destroyed. I should say rather, Let the Cathedral system be used—thoroughly used, even as it is—and let it be somewhat reformed, in order that it may be used more effectually. Surely it is better to employ and improve the machinery which we have, than to construct something new. Moreover, a great deal can be done without any reform at all. Very much depends upon the feeling entertained among the Cathedral body towards the Diocese at large, and in the Diocese at large towards the Cathedral body. It is surprising how difficulties vanish, if we intend that they shall vanish. There is a story in clerical circles that an excellent and eminent Clergyman used to say, that a Cathedral was an iceberg in the midst of a Diocese. It was of course highly improper in him to use any such language; and the story goes on to say, that a serious

retribution fell upon him. He was made a Dean. But I have a strong impression that under his genial influence, the Cathedral, over which he presided, became, not an iceberg, but a stove in the midst of the Diocese. And I venture to assert that the first step in Cathedral Reform is heartily to use what we possess, with a distinct reference to the well-being of the Diocese around,—in other words, to turn our icebergs into stoves.

But still I think some reforms are imperatively needed. The minutes which remain to me can easily be counted. I will therefore very briefly suggest some changes which, in my opinion, would establish new and very useful relations between the Cathedrals and the Parochial Clergy on the one hand, and the Cathedrals and the Bishops on the other.

To turn the Cathedrals into mere Parish Churches would be, as it seems to me, a fatal mistake. If this were done, the Diocesan idea would recede still further into the distance. Still I conceive they ought to have very intimate relations with the Parochial Clergy. So in fact they have now; but on a wrong method. Our Deans indeed are precluded from Parochial cures, and very properly; for they ought to have plenty of work of other kinds to do. But Canons are quite free to have preferment in any Diocese. Of our four Canons, three have their customary homes and customary work in the Dioceses of Rochester, Winchester, and Worcester, respectively, and only one in that of Chester. Their chief energies must, of course, be given to their Parishes; and, coming to the Cathedral City in rotation, they have clearly no opportunity of co-operating in continuous work for the benefit of that City or its Diocese. Yet the Cathedral endowments do properly belong to that City and that Diocese. Let no one say that I am speaking disrespectfully of my colleagues. This would be quite impossible. Probably we gain as much in Chester by the intermittent visits of our Canons, as other Cathedral cities would gain by the continuous residence of theirs. Among them they have the qualities which would be precisely the most useful for Diocesan work; but this makes the regret only the greater, that we cannot concentrate all this beneficial force upon our own Diocese.

But what do I propose?

In the first place, I would consolidate the mere Residentiary Cathedral work in fewer hands. There is indeed far more to be done in regard to the mere Cathedral itself than is commonly supposed, especially when (as in our case) the fabric needs a thorough restoration. But the Dean with two Residentiaries, each continuously resident, and each having Diocesan duties, would be amply sufficient.

I speak of Diocesan duties. Here let me give expression to a thought which lies at the root of the whole opinion I have been led to entertain concerning Cathedral offices. What is the theory which ought to regulate appointments to these posts?

Sometimes they are spoken of as rewards for past service in the Church. If by this it is meant that good service in the past establishes a claim to higher responsibility and to opportunities for still larger service in the future, this will easily be recognized as a just and sound opinion. Some view these positions as intended to be places of learned leisure. There is no theory with which, as a mere theory, I more heartily sympathize; but it is very apt to break down in practice. I believe the wisest reform would be to assign definite duties to each Cathedral office. We must expect all applications of endowments, in this day, to be very sharply criticised. And here let me add a further remark. The view which I advocate tends to simplify the perplexities of Patronage. If an office has no well-defined duties attached to it, it is difficult to blame the asssigning of such preferment to any Clergyman of high character; but if well-defined duties accompany the office, public opinion will require the appointment of highly efficient men.

But what are these Diocesan duties?

The answer will of course vary in each several Diocese. The organization which might be best for a Welsh Diocese, such as Llandaff or Bangor, might hardly be suitable for Salisbury. Or there might be local duties in such cities as Norwich and Rochester which would find no parallel at Ripon. But in no case will the answer be difficult. Speaking generally, the Residentiaries might be the Archdeacons, closely associated with the Mother Church, after having had parochial experience elsewhere. Or they might conduct the business of Diocesan Societies. Let me complete my answer from my own point of view, by saying that I am myself at this moment acting, by the Bishop's wish, as Rural Dean; that I am one of the Secretaries of the Diocesan Board of Education, with its two Training Colleges, and also Chairman of the Council of the Theological College at Birkenhead; that I have far more work than I can do efficiently; and that some of the Canons would discharge some of these duties far better than I can. They are however precluded from the attempt, because their homes are only occasionally in Chester.

Next, my earnest desire would be to see another kind of connection established between Cathedral life and Parochial life. Some would destroy the Capitular System. I am very anxious to see it enlarged and strengthened. I have lately been in Italy, and I have seen there the harm that results from the reduction of the Chapters to a mere shadow. Suppose that each Diocese had twenty Canons (they might be the Rural Deans), chosen by the Bishop from among the Parochial Clergy, each having a small accession to his income, each having the duty of preaching in the Cathedral, each being *bonâ fide* a member of the Chapter. Speaking, as I do here, in reference to Cathedrals of the New Foundation, I am recommending a partial return to some of the customs pertaining to the Old Foundation and a retracing

of some of the steps of recent Legislation. What I urge is the conversion of a Cathedral Chapter into a Diocesan Chapter. If this were done, we should have immediately the elements of a Council for the Bishop. We should likewise have the materals for doing what Mr. Clabon not unnaturally desires—reducing the Bishop from an absolute to a constitutional monarch, and that without demolishing the Cathedral system, but by exactly the contrary process. And further, we should have here, with the addition of Clergymen and Laymen elected by representation, the elements of a true Diocesan Synod.

I am aware that this could not be done without some new action on the part of the Government. The right method of that action is, I venture to say confidently, by means of an Executive Commission, bearing the same relation to the Commission of Inquiry, which reported in 1854, as the second University Commissions bore to the first, and having authority to deal with the several Chapters according to the differing exigencies of their respective Cathedrals. If His Grace the Archbishop of York will move, in the House of Lords, for the appointment of such a Commission, I am able to say that he will be thanked, not only by many Deans, but by many Canons too.

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